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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a discussion of recent and pending legislation dealing with day care, child advocacy, family services, juvenile delinquency, and maternal and child health care. Six suggestions are offered concerning legislation which needs to be enacted: (1) a child and family services program along the lines of the child development bill President Nixon vetoed in 1971; (2) an early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment program; (3) a social services bill; (4) a national health insurance program which includes full and adequate provisions for the care of young children; (5) tax reform legislation which provides tax relief to middle-income families; and (6) special attention to programs related to foster care and adoption. It is urged that political action on behalf of children's programs be significantly increased. Politicians should be held accountable for their actions, and their views on children's issues should be publicized. The members of the National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth are urged to lobby for key legislative issues and to issue report cards based on how members of Congress vote on issues of importance to children. (CS)

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[RECENT AND PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
IN CONGRESS]

REMARKS OF SENATOR WALTER F. MONDALE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ORGANIZATIONS
for CHILDREN and YOUTH
WASHINGTON, DC
September 12, 1974

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Permit me to tell you what a pleasure it is to be here tonight. It's not only that I like to be among old friends. I also like this neighborhood (15th and Pennsylvania). It's just a shame that we couldn't be meeting in that place just one block west of here.

Well, maybe someday . . . especially if we pass my bill to lower the voting age to 13 months . . . and outlaw spanking and homework.

Seriously, I appreciate this chance to take part in your annual meeting. I believe strongly in NCOCY, and the work you are doing. During my ten years in the Senate I have probably devoted more of my time to the problems of children than to any other issue. And one of the main lessons I have learned is how much all of us in the children's area need to keep in touch with the activities and ideas of others.

We need a clearinghouse to turn to as we deal with problems . . . a source that can help bring together the experiences and advice of a wide variety of groups. And the organizations and individuals working on behalf of children . . . both in Washington and throughout the country . . . need the kind of information and support you are providing.

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You have helped us get a better grasp of the issues, and their implications. And you have helped your members have an increasing impact on policy concerning issues such as social services . . . day care . . . juvenile delinquency . . . and maternal and child health. The model day care licensing code you developed has been especially valuable to groups across the country.

* * * * * * * * * *

Your work, along with that of others, has helped produce some encouraging results. Despite the Nixon Administration's indifference -- or outright hostility -- toward many initiatives to help children . . . we have made some recent progress that we can all be proud of:

--We have passed and had signed into law the Child Abuse, Prevention and Treatment Act . . . obtained a $4.5 million supplemental appropriation for it last year . . . and are about to obtain a $15 million appropriation for it this year. This single program won't solve the widespread and tragic disease of child abuse that claims 60,000 victims every year. And it won't help any children at all until HEW finally hires a Director and begins spending some of the funds already appropriated. But if we keep pushing, this program . . . in conjunction with numerous recent actions at the State and local levels . . . can bring immeasurable help to thousands of innocent children and their parents.

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--We have passed and had signed into law The Education Amendments of 1974 . . . perhaps the most comprehensive and innovative federal aid to education bill ever enacted into law. It isn't a perfect law, and we still need to fight for adequate appropriations. But it contains the necessary authority to expand our efforts in a large number of critical areas such as the education of the disadvantaged and the handicapped . . . bilingual education . . . Indian education . . . and Women's Educational Equity. It offers, in short, the chance to continue our pursuit of the goal of equal educational opportunity.

--We have successfully postponed . . . twice . . . implementation of HEW's regressive Social Services regulations. We still haven't enacted the kind of permanent law we need to preserve that important program. But I believe we have developed the kind of public and Congressional support for this program that will permit us to do so in the near future.

--We have just passed and had signed into law a Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. It's promise won't become a reality until we obtain funding for it. But the bill provides the kind of authority necessary to begin cutting the unbelievably high rate of recidivism

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among youthful offenders (74%) . . . and holds real hope for bringing help to the estimated one million youngsters who run away from home each year.

None of these initiatives is without controversy. None represents a final solution. And none is complete. But we should be proud of them and encouraged by them as we push on. For they are signs of hard fought progress. And they represent a piece by piece approach that we will need to sustain if we hope to bring justice to children in jeopardy.

Van Gogh described this challenge well. "Great things", he said, "are not done by impulse but by a series of small things brought together."

We have begun this series . . . we have started the process of helping children in jeopardy. But you know, as well as I do, the problems that remain.

--10 million children still live in poverty.

--Thousands of children are left all day in damaging, custodial day care programs . . . or left alone to fend for themselves.

--Countless children die unnecessarily every year because we continue to tolerate an infant mortality rate higher than that of 13 other nations.

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--200,000 children are struck each year by blindness, deafness or other severely handicapping conditions which could have been prevented if they and their mothers received adequate health care.

--Thousands of children drift or get lost in foster care . . . never receiving a chance to live in a stable family setting.

--And countless other children are victims of substandard housing . . . hunger . . . the migrant stream . . . discrimination . . . and all the rest.

And while the most obvious victims are the children living in poverty, it is not just poor children who are in jeopardy. These crippling conditions strike children from every background:

--of the 17 million school-aged children HEW identified several years ago as "educationally deprived," less than one-third of them came from poverty families.

--The nearly five million handicapped children who receive no special education services come from families at all socio-economic levels.

--and the victims of teenage drug abuse . . . and teenage suicide . . . are by no means just the children of the poor.

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Almost five years ago the Joint Commission on the Mental Health of Children concluded:

> "All the world loves a baby, so it is said. We as a society do not act that way."

Despite some important progress in recent years, that harsh indictment still rings too true.

Anyone who questions that judgment need only look at the federal budget. Nothing says more about a country's priorities than the ways it chooses to spend its money. Yet we continue to invest less than 10% of our federal budget in programs serving children and youth . . . although they represent 40% of our population. . . and 100% of our future.

I certainly don't have any simple answers or magic solution to these problems . . . but I do have some suggestions about where we should go from here.

First, we need to renew and redouble our efforts to enact a Child and Family Services program along the lines of the child development bill President Nixon vetoed in 1971. There are almost six million preschool children whose mothers are working . . . but only about 700,000 licensed day care spaces available to serve them. Some of these other children are receiving adequate care from their neighbors or relatives . . . but many are not. We desperately need to upgrade the disgracefully low quality of child care.

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available to so many working families. And we must also provide families with a wide variety of other services to choose from, including prenatal and postnatal health care . . . part day and in-the-home preschool education opportunities . . . nutrition programs. . . mental health services . . . classes in parenthood . . . and all the rest.

As many of your know, I have introduced a revised version of the vetoed bill in the Senate, and Representative Brademas has introduced a companion bill in the House. We began joint Senate-House hearings last month, and intend to continue them.

We want to make this one of the issues in the Congressional campaigns this fall. . . and be prepared to move the bill next session if the election results are favorable. And I would urge you in the strongest possible terms to do all you can to educate your candidates about these needs. . . and get them committed to support this initiative.

Second, we need to increase our efforts to get the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program fully implemented . . . and I am delighted to see that this is the subject of one of your workshops. The law requiring these services for poor children was enacted seven years ago. You know how long it took to get any regulations promulgated. And you know how HEW tried to get this law removed from the books. We were successful in keeping this law alive . . . and legislating a penalty for States which don't

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implement it . . . but up to this date still only 10% of the children eligible have been served.

These preventive health services are not only humane and essential . . . they are one of the most cost-effective investments we can make. Any further delay in the implementation of this program is absolutely inexcusable . . . both legally and morally. This problem deserves special priority in your deliberations, and I'm pleased to know you are planning to give it continuing attention.

Third, we must continue our efforts to get a Social Services bill enacted this session, so that the vital programs offered on Title IV-A can continue and grow. Postponing the implementation of those regressive HEW regulations has helped to prevent disastrous and deep cutbacks in day care programs. . . delinquency prevention . . . alcoholism rehabilitation . . . aid to the elderly. . . and all the rest. But they have left a crippling uncertainty and ambiguity that can no longer be tolerated.

Fourth, we need to make sure that any national health insurance program that emerges from Congress includes full and adequate provisions for the care of young children. I know that your health cluster has been focusing on this issue, and I want to continue to work with you on this effort.

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Fifth, we must continue our efforts to pass tax reform legislation which provides tax relief to average families. Inflation is torturing American families . . . especially low and moderate income families who must devote a large portion of their budget to necessities like food and fuel . . . while corporate profits are soaring. I will keep fighting for proposals which close tax loopholes and use the revenues recovered to provide tax relief to families.

Finally, I believe we must begin to take a hard look at the problems related to foster care and adoption. There are over a third of a million neglected and dependent children in foster care today. . . and their number has been increasing steadily over the past decade. Too many of them are lost or trapped in the maze of laws, regulations, and bureaucracies . . . and never receive an opportunity to be part of a stable family. This is an area my Subcommittee is beginning to explore, and we plan to hold hearings on it next year. I want to commend you for creating a new cluster group to focus on this area, and I want to work closely with you on it.

This list is certainly not exhaustive. There are many other issues we must continue to pursue. . . . including funding for the maternal and child health programs and for the new Juvenile Justice Act . . . enactment of a federal youth camp safety law. . . and all the rest.

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But let's be honest with ourselves about prospects for the future. Inflation is the number one priority on everyone's mind. And the popular solution to that problem . . . regardless of its relevance to the kind of inflation - recession we are experiencing . . . seems to be a budget cut. That is what President Ford is promising. And as a member of the new Senate Budget Committee, I must say that many members of Congress seem to favor that approach.

You know which parts of the budget are in jeopardy. You heard President Ford warn against "excessive funding" for education . . . and against "unwarranted cuts in national defense" . . . not vice versa. And you know the power of the lobbies involved.

So let's not kid ourselves. It is going to take an even greater effort to enact, and fund, and implement children's programs in the foreseeable future than it has in the past.

If we are going to succeed in this effort, it seems to me we must significantly increase our political action on behalf of children's programs. It ought to cost politicians their seats to vote wrong on children's issues . . . but it clearly doesn't today. This must be changed. And we could start by creating ways to compile and publicize politicians' records on children's issues . . . and ways to hold them accountable for their actions.

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There are some promising developments in this area taking place right now in some States and localities. Many of you know about the "Children's Campaign" in Massachusetts. That organization is holding hearings around the State to develop a comprehensive children's platform . . . and will soon be inviting political candidates to testify publicly about the extent to which they will support that platform. The Children's Campaign will then issue a report card on all candidates . . . based on their responses to the children's platform and any public record they may already have or children issues . . . and work hard during the campaign to elect friends of children to office.

It is too early to tell how successful this venture will ultimately be . . . but I had a chance to visit with some of its leaders last month. . . and I am very encouraged by the kind of press and public attention their hearings have generated.

This kind of effort needs to be expanded . . . in other States and localities . . . and on the national level. I would urge all of you as individuals to seriously consider creating campaigns of that kind in your States and localities. And, above all, I would urge NCOCY, as an organization, to explore the idea of creating a political action capacity . . . separate from and in addition to your clearing-house responsibilities . . . which would permit you to lobby directly on key legislative issues . . . and to issue report cards based on how members of Congress vote on issues of importance to children.

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This won't be easy. And it won't guarantee instant success. But, in my judgment, it is the single most important thing we can do to help children in jeopardy.

It would give real meaning to the wise words of Maria Montessori, who said at the turn of the century:

> "Adults should be organized not for themselves, but for their children."

And it would go a long way toward ending what Erik Erikson has called "the deadliest of all possible sins" . . . "the mutilation of a child's spirit."